

Our mission is to empower lifelong curiosity and connection to the natural world through the art of Walter Anderson and kindred artists.

The Walter Anderson Museum of Art inspires discovery, imagination, and community-building on the Gulf Coast and beyond through programs, exhibitions, and outreach; and embodies Walter Anderson's vision for societies in harmony with their environments.



The **Walter Anderson Museum of Art** is a nationally accredited art museum located in historic Ocean Springs on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. WAMA is dedicated to the preservation and celebration of artist-philosopher Walter Anderson (1903-1965). Walter Anderson's paintings, drawings, murals, block prints, sculpture, carvings, and writings of coastal plants, animals, landscapes, and people have placed him among the most compelling and singular artists of the 20th century. WAMA also honors Anderson's brothers, Peter Anderson (1901-1984), master potter and founder of Shearwater Pottery; and James McConnell Anderson (1907-1998), noted painter and ceramist.

Since its founding in 1991, WAMA has been a keystone of the state's cultural life. Walter Anderson, who was born in New Orleans in 1903 and lived on the coast until his death in 1965, is almost certainly Mississippi's most studied and well-known visual artist. His influences span centuries, informed by pre-contact



civilizations and European arrival; indigenous ways of knowing and ancient astronomy; Greek, Asian, and Meso-American motifs; Western literary canon, from *The Iliad* and *Paradise Lost* to *Don Quixote* and Darwin's "Voyage of the Beagle" (all of which he illustrated); folklore, myth, and legend; agrarian idealism and the collective uncertainty surrounding modernity and nuclear proliferation; and the same environmental concerns that informed Rachel Carson's landmark work, *Silent Spring*.

Not unlike Cezanne, Anderson cultivated a belief in realization between man and nature. "If humans need the natural world in order to find spiritual transcendence," wrote Anderson's biographer Christopher Maurer, "nature requires the artist to fully 'realize' the significance of its forms." Anderson believed that nature, in its infinite wisdom and variety, could restore societies to a more perfect and participatory existence. "In order to realize the beauty of humanity we must realize our relation to nature," wrote Anderson.



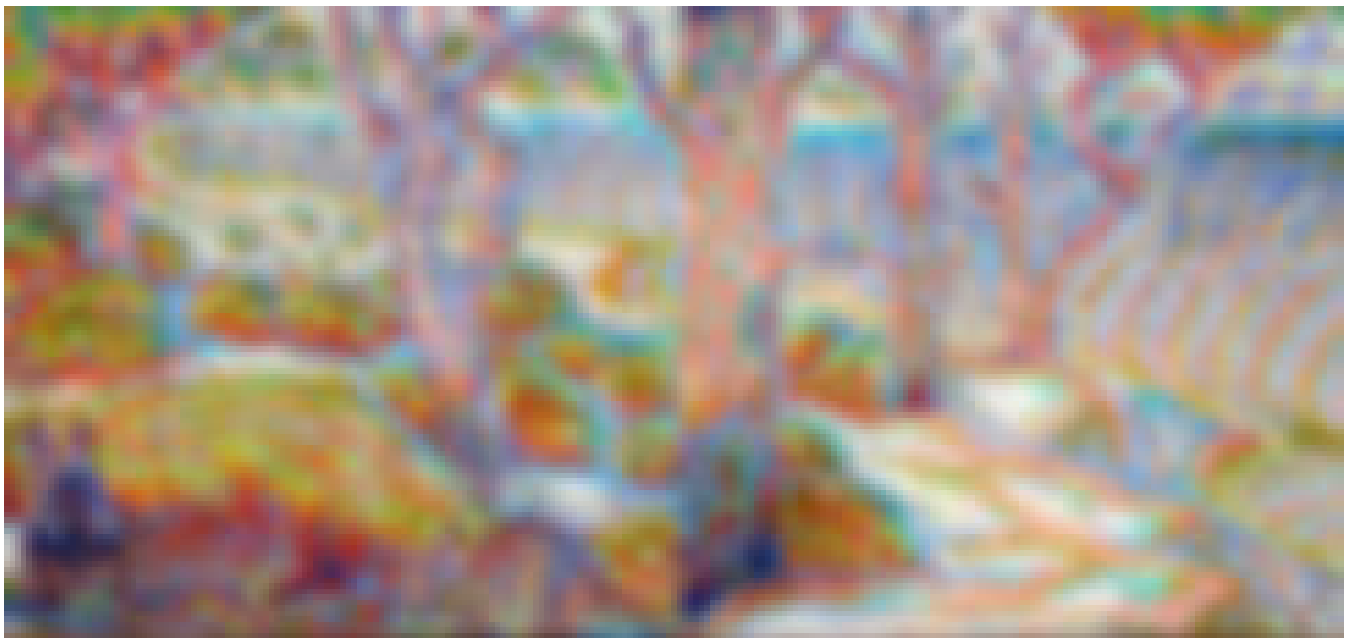
Walter Inglis Anderson (1903-1965), *Self-portrait*, c. 1950, Watercolor.

WAMA embodies the dream of The Friends of Walter Anderson, incorporated in 1974. The Friends' nonprofit corporation secured the use of the land adjacent to the city-owned Ocean Springs Community Center, built in 1949-50. The Community Center is the site of Walter Anderson's monumental 3,000 square foot murals, which depict the historic discovery of the Mississippi Coast and its diverse climates. The City commissioned Walter Anderson to execute the murals in 1950 for a fee of \$1.00. They were completed after 16 months in 1951-52.

The museum was designed by architect Edward Pickard, then husband of Mary Anderson Pickard, daughter of the artist, in conjunction with Eley & Associates. A 2012 expansion was designed by Dennis Cowart. The design, reminiscent of a cathedral, celebrates the artist's work and echoes its connection nature by literally connecting his most public project, the Community Center murals, and his most private work, the Little Room mural, through a long galleria of southern yellow pine.

WAMA's collection is comprised of more than a thousand objects owned by the museum and another thousand on long-term loan from the family. In addition to showcasing the work of the Anderson family, WAMA displays art by visiting artists, chosen for exhibition based upon their connection with Walter Anderson's art or philosophies.

Walter Anderson did not separate "fine" art from "folk," opting instead for a conception of creativity and art making that aligned with makers from across human civilization. He was as influenced by ancient cave painting as he was academic study. Anderson viewed his art not simply as a product through which he might earn acclaim or fortune, but as a process for grasping, if only for a moment, the bounty of creation – whether it was the ascent of the tern, the brilliance of aster, the silhouette of the alligator, or the magic hour at sunset. He became attuned to the ways of animals; rather than objectify them, he referred to them as his "familiar." Anderson's block prints were propagated widely. These works were intended to be accessible; created, said Anderson, for "people who cannot afford to pay a great deal for works of art, but still have an appetite for beauty."



Walter Inglis Anderson (1903-1965), *Horn Island at Sunset*, Oil on board, 1960; Permanent Collection, Donation of Mary Anderson Pickard.

Horn Island, one in a series of Gulf Coast barrier isles near Anderson's Ocean Springs home, became for him equal parts Eden – a paradisaical home; and *terra incognita* – an elusive, sometimes dangerous, and infinitely mysterious piece of earth that contained

paradisiacal home, and *terra incognita* – an elusive, sometimes dangerous, and intimately mysterious piece of earth that contained elemental ways of knowing and seeing. Storytellers have referred to Anderson as both “Adam in a hat” and “Don Quixote on a bicycle,” referencing his Horn Island existence and his extensive journeys on bicycle, which took him thousands of miles across New York, Tennessee, Texas, and Florida. He was also part Johnny Appleseed, flinging drawings and watercolors to the wind, to the fire, or buried in hidden stacks, to let nature and posterity do with them what they would. His fascination with myth and folklore resulted in a 1949 exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, *Folk Tale and Fantasy: Modern Scroll Prints in Color by Walter I. Anderson*, which contained groundbreaking six-foot linoleum block print scrolls depicting Jack the Giant Killer; Sinbad, the Sailor; Three Billy Goats Gruff; The Pied Piper; The Golden Apples of Hesperides; and many others.

During his lifetime, Walter Anderson shirked the spotlight – he did not paint for fame; and much of his work was still a secret when he died in 1965. If not for the museum that bears his name and the family and friends who advocated for it, it is likely that one of the most fascinating stories in American art history might have faded.

Instead, it lives on in stunning color, housed in a jewel-box museum where tens of thousands of visitors from across the country and abroad make the pilgrimage each year. Anderson encourages viewers to see their backyards, oceanside vistas, wilderness landscapes, or urban skylines with new eyes, just as he reflected his own horizons through sublime linework, evocative form, and inspiring brushstroke. His life and art are testaments to the power of place, the value of shifts in perspective, and the potential for continued adventures.

“His significance in the history of art may lie in his perception of fundamental reality: the interconnectedness of the world, the dynamism of matter, the knowledge that man is a participant in nature rather than an observer.” – art historian Patti Carr Black

STAFF AND TRUSTEES

The Museum and its programs are supported in part by the City of Ocean Springs and Jackson County. Support is also provided in part by funding from the Mississippi Arts Commission, a state agency, and in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

Hours:

Monday - Saturday: 11AM-5PM

Sunday: 1-5PM

Holiday closings: New Year's Day, Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

Adults: \$10

AAA / Military / Seniors (with ID): \$8

Child or Student (Age 18+ with college issued ID): \$5

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